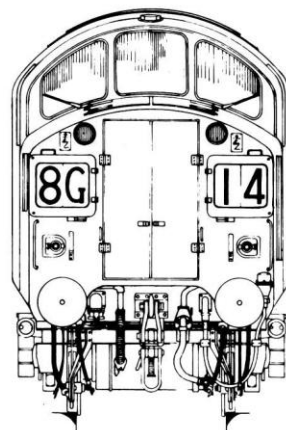


ALSAGER RAILWAY ASSOCIATION



NEWSLETTER

February 2021

Welcome to the second issue of our approximately-monthly club newsletter. As always, all club members are encouraged to submit content* (short or long, with or without pictures) to the current editor – the more, the better!

Content is preferred in Word, or in an email, rather than pdf. Pictures can be sent embedded in Word or separately as jpegs

Copies of the newsletter will now be posted on the website as well as sent to members by email. Authors of each article will be credited on the website unless they tell me when submitting their content, in which case their submission will be posted anonymously, although they will continue to be credited in the email version sent to members.

Jules Attard, Editor

Jules.attard81@gmail.com

Club Announcements

AGM - Paul Whittaker

The AGM will be held on 26th March at 7:30 p.m. by Zoom. I will circulate all club reports by email in advance; if you have any matters to raise or objections to the proposals, please let me know before the meeting.

ARA Exhibition - John Cox

Although planning for the 2021 exhibition in Crewe continues (13/14 November – save the date), the July show in St. John's has been cancelled this year as the availability of the school can't be

guaranteed. For the Crewe exhibition, most of the layouts and traders we've contacted who were invited in 2020 have agreed to come in 2021:

Layouts		Traders
Confirmed		Confirmed
ALBERT ROAD	OO	ANORAKS ANONYMOUS
BEDFORD ROAD	O	BOOKLAW
BLAGNDARE ROAD	OO	LOCO FLEETSHOP
CAROLINE CONCRETE WORKS	O-16.5	PLUS DAUGHTERS
CEDAR CANYON JUNCTION	2mm scale	SKYTREX (2013) LIMITED
CROFT MILL WORKS	O	THE MODEL TREE SHOP
EVINGTON ST JOHN	OO	TOPP TRAINS LLP
HAMPTON END	45 mm	
KAROLINA FALLS	16.5 mm	
KLEINE RUNDFAHRT	N	
MYTON	OO	
NEW DALBY	N	
NEW ORLE	N	
ST JOHNS	OO	
WHITBURY LANE	N	
WOLFE LANE	O	
To be confirmed		To be confirmed
CANAL STREET DEPOT	OO	BUFFERBEAM
FALCON ROAD	O	DAPOL
HAKUHO	Z	FOOTPLATE
MERS LES BAINS	32mm	
UPPER CWMTWYCH	N	

Member's Activities

Bayko – Adrian Finney

Adrian has been adding to his collection of Bayko Bakelite building kits from the 1950s and shared a photo of one of his creations:



Middlewich Station – Paul Whittaker

I have lived in Middlewich for over 30 years, and all that time there has been a campaign to reopen the station as Middlewich is now the largest town in Cheshire without a station. So I thought I would build a layout based on Middlewich so passenger trains could stop there once again. I found the book "Railways Across Mid-Cheshire" by Alan Wilkinson very useful and also the Disused Station web site for photographs and information. My layout is 1350 mm by 600 mm and N gauge. It is set approximately in the 1950s.

Middlewich station was located on the Sandbach - Northwich line of the London & North Western Railway (LNWR). Authorised in 1863 the line opened to goods services in November 1867. The LNWR built the line primarily to tap into the lucrative salt trade that existed in the mid-Cheshire area but also introduced a passenger service onto it on 1 July 1868.



The Sandbach - Northwich line was built as a single track railway but the bridges and structures allowed for a future doubling of the line.

Middlewich station opened with the introduction of passenger services. It was the only station on the line and also a passing point for trains. The station was located on the north side of Holmes Chapel Road (A54) which passed over the line on a bridge. Being a passing point Middlewich station was provided with two platforms. The down platform (Northwich direction) was on the west side of the line and was linked to Holmes Chapel Road by a driveway. It was provided with a single storey timber building in typical LNWR style. The building had a booking office, waiting rooms and toilets.



A water tower for locomotives was provided at the north end of the down platform.



The up platform (Sandbach direction) had an almost identical building that had housed waiting rooms and toilets. The up platform was connected from its southern end to Holmes Chapel Road by a set of steps.



Middlewich station had goods facilities which were located on the west side of the line adjacent to the passenger station. They included a large brick goods shed and 5 sidings. (Can you spot the station cat?)



At the time of opening Middlewich was served by trains that ran between Crewe and Northwich or Acton Bridge. Northwich was a Cheshire Lines Committee (CLC) station on their Manchester - Chester line. Acton Bridge was on the LNWR main line that linked Crewe to the north and Scotland (later to become the West Coast Main Line). The line through Middlewich ran almost parallel to the LNWR main line several miles to its east.

In 1892 an LNWR Type 4 signal box with a 16 lever frame opened at the north end of the up platform. (The signalman is a keen gardener.)



By 1900 the line south of Middlewich station and half a mile to the north of it had been doubled.

In 1904 Middlewich was listed as having a 1 ton crane and being able to handle parcels, livestock, private carriages by rail and horse boxes.



On 2 January 1911 a halt was opened on the Sandbach - Northwich line at Cledford Bridge and on 1 October 1914 another was opened at Billinge Green.

The July 1922 timetable showed 12 up and 11 down trains served Middlewich Monday-to-Saturday. Most of the services ran between Crewe and Northwich or Acton Bridge but there was also a direct service to London Euston at 11.30am and a return working that ran to Manchester London Road via Northwich at 5.59pm.

Middlewich station became part of the London Midland & Scottish Railway (LMS) on 1 January 1923. The LMS summer timetable for 1932 showed 11 up and 10 down trains Monday-to-Friday. There were retimed workings and one less up train on Saturdays. The through train to London and its return working to Manchester London Road still ran. No services ran on Sundays.

The Sandbach - Northwich line halts closed on 2 March 1942.

By the summer of 1947 there were only 3 up and 4 down services from Middlewich station Monday-to-Friday. On Saturdays there were 5 up and 5 down trains. Worked by the "Middlewich Dodger" Push and Pull service.



On 1 January 1948 Middlewich became part of British Railways London Midland Region (BR[LM]). The service did not improve under BR[LM] the summer 1957 timetable showing 4 trains in each direction Monday-to-Friday with an extra train each way on Saturdays.



BR[LM] withdrew the passenger service from Middlewich on 4 April 1960.

The station remained open for goods services until 27 November 1967 maintaining the same facilities as it did in 1904 until the end.

The up platform building survived until the late 1960s and the down until the early 1980s. The signal box closed on 30 March 1980.

The line through Middlewich continued to be a busy railway for freight trains after complete closure of the station. Due to the fact that it runs parallel to the West Coast Main Line it had always been used for diverted main line trains from that route when engineering works were being carried out. The diversions and freight services are still running today.

The Middlewich Rail Link Campaign was formed in 1992 to campaign for the reopening of Middlewich station.

Text from <http://www.disused-stations.org.uk/m/middlewich/index.shtml>

Methods

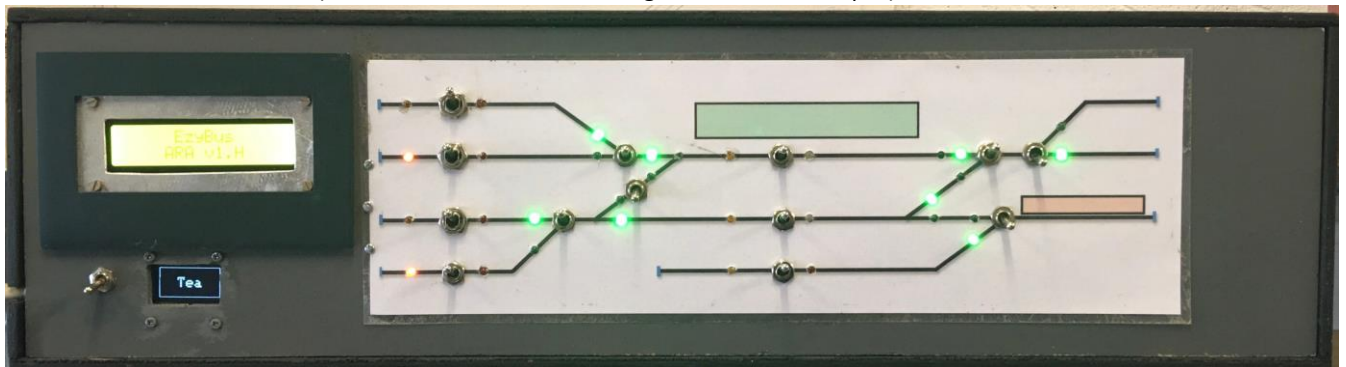
Semi-Automatic DCC End to End shuttle layout with platform stop – Arthur Roberts

The following is an overview. Please contact the author (Arthur Roberts, 00 Group & MERG member) if further explanation is needed.

Equipment: DCC Control system & relevant power supply unit. 12v d.c. supply for EzyBus.
Locos fitted with DCC Concepts ZEN Black decoders (or similar e.g. Lenz, Zimo)
DCC Concepts ABC (Automatic Brake Control) Modules (minimum of 3 for my layout)
End to End layout with blocks (i.e. sections) – 3 on my layout: L.H. End; Centre; R.H. End

Control Panel

(Green area = Platform, Orange area = Goods depot)



Operation¹: 1) Position locos (max 2) in separate sidings at LH end of layout.
2) Ensure that all loco routes are clear obvious, but often forgotten!!
3) Select loco on hand controller (CAB) & set in motion up to max speed for that loco.
4) Dispatch that loco & select 2nd loco on CAB, set that in motion up to max speed.
5) Locos continually shuttle from End to End with stop in centre at platform or loop (if desired).

Each Loco moves forward, accelerates to max speed, enters centre block (platform or loop), decelerates, stops², accelerates to max speed, enters RH end block, decelerates & stops², reverses & accelerates to max speed, enters centre block, decelerates & stops², accelerates to max speed, enters LH block, decelerates, stops², loco reverses & goes to RH end and so on until locos are overridden on CAB.

Centre slow/stop function can easily be overridden by use of one switch per centre ABC Module.

The acceleration & deceleration is very smooth & stopping points are very accurate & consistent.

¹ Operation for my layout)

² Stop time is 10secs min, multiples of 10 secs - max total delay time 42minutes.

Notes: Blocks (sections) – L.H. End ; Centre; R.H. End are isolated from each other on one rail only.
Locos need to be started at left hand block or centre block.
Locos must be put on track in one direction (e.g. front of loco pointing to right hand end¹).
Track needs to be very clean.
If power is lost or loco is released & that loco is at right hand block then that loco may not start or may set off & crash at the end of the track whoops !!
Locos can still be driven direct from hand controller (CAB) – i.e. auto system can be overridden.
L.H. End section track with the last loco selected on it can be isolated (using a switch) & de-isolated at any time.
Length of each block will need to be determined when laying track according to length of train to be used.
Not possible to extend length of train if that results in train not stopping before reaching track ends.
Not possible to change block positions, except by re-laying track or cutting track & rewiring to form new block.
Stop times can be altered by changing CV values in loco decoder (CV59 & CV60).
Comprehensive handbook freely available on DCC Concepts website.
DCC Concepts decoders & ABC Modules are available from Trident Trains (open Wed to Sun) at Dagfields near Nantwich – Preorder & collect or will send in post. See website.
One DCC decoder & 3 ABC Modules cost £45. Decoders have multiple CV setting possibilities.
It is possible to build ABC modules yourself using 3A high speed diodes (details in DCC Concepts handbook).

EzyBus: Comprehensive manual & construction details available from MERG.
Some parts (incl. Output Module kit No.22 @ £7.21 & Input Module kit No. 23 @ £5.26) available from MERG, but you still need to order Arduino Uno with LCD shield (Approx £10 for both – eBay).

Acknowledgements: Staff at DCC Concepts - contactable & very helpful, on the phone or by email.
Trident Trains - stockist of DCC decoders & ABC Modules.
Members of the ARA 00 Group - for help to substantially improve Arduino Codes (sketches), assistance with 3D printing & general (often inappropriate) banter.

Taking Photos with greater depth-of-field – Jules Attard

Model railway photos often suffer from limited depth-of-field, even with the best cameras and using macro lenses. After the pictures of my layout in the last newsletter (and an unexpected appearance in the pages of the March BRM!), a few members have asked how I managed to take photos with so much in focus. So here is a short introduction to **focus stacking**.

You may be already familiar with High Dynamic Range (HDR) photography, which is similar in concept. In HDR, you increase the range of visible tones in a high-contrast shot (typically, a shot in strong sunlight with deep shadows) by taking two shots, one exposed for the highlights and one for the shadows, then use software to combine them to get more detail than a camera sensor can capture in one. In focus stacking, you take several images focused on different points in the image, then use software to combine them into one shot with everything of interest in focus.

Although there are software solutions for some cameras which can automate the photo-taking part, all you need to have a go is a camera that can be manually focused, a tripod, and some focus stacking software. I use CombineZP, which is a free Windows-only download from combinezp.software.informer.com. Here's how to proceed:

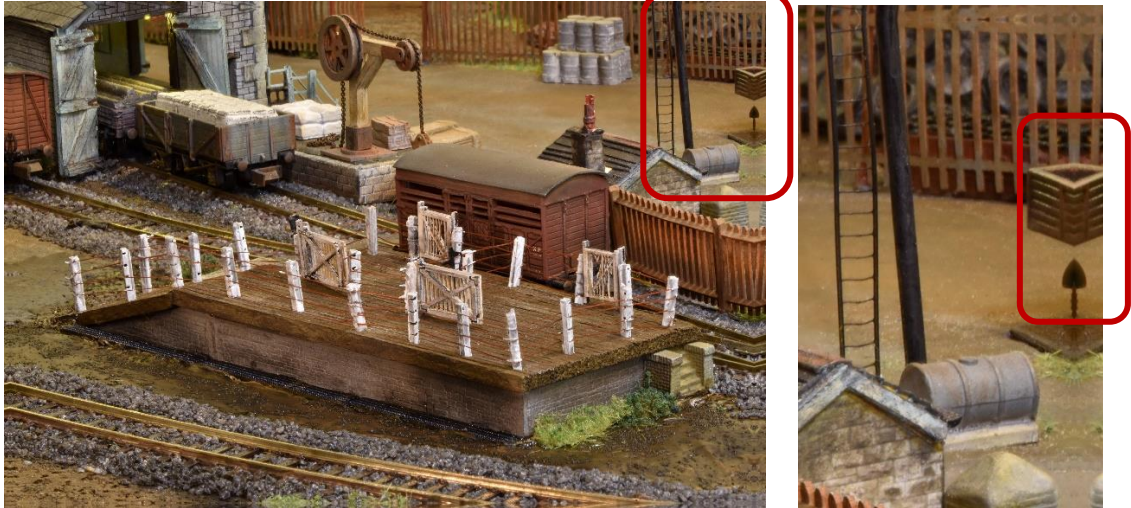
1. Compose your shot, and set the exposure: it's best to use manual exposure if you have it (as you can guarantee the camera will change the exposure if you let it), the highest detail your camera can save, and the smallest aperture your camera/lens allows. Using the smallest aperture gives each photo the most depth of field, so you'll need to take fewer of them. Exposures will be long, and all photos must be identically-framed, so you must use a stable tripod.
2. Focus on the closest point in your image and take a photo. Without moving anything or changing the exposure, take several more photos focused at increasing distances from the camera; take these in a sequence from close to far, as this software will get confused if the photos are not taken in order of focal distance. I usually find 4-6 photos is enough: too few, and you will get pools of sharp focus separated by fuzzy out-of-focus zones; too many, and your computer will crash due to lack of processing power.

You will get a series of shots like these two:



3. Import the pictures into the software. Refocusing between shots will have introduced small shifts as the lens moves, so adjust their alignment (in CombineZP, I use *Stack->Size and Alignment->Auto (Two Pass shift and scale)*).

4. Now run the macro to combine the images (*Macro->Do Stack*), wait a few seconds, and the output is one focus-stacked picture.
5. In this software, the default file save only gives you a small thumbnail, so to get a high-res image, I use *File->Save Frame/Picture As*, saving as a jpeg at 100% quality.
6. The new photo will have some artifacts from the stacking, which you can see as mirror-image reflections around the edge of the picture, like this:



Use your image-editing software to crop these out, and make any other adjustments (levelling horizons, changing the exposure, cloning out dust or telegraph poles emerging from loco chimneys) that you need.

7. The finished picture:

